

Insider

For March 18, 2009

By Kim Burger

I hesitate to write yet another article about bicycling, because I tend to do that a lot, but there's so much to say! Especially now that the snow is melted and temperatures are beginning to climb. Halleluiah for that!

I just polished off a second application to the American League of Bicyclists to become an official Bicycle Friendly Community. It's been an interesting and rewarding process. Imagine bringing representatives of the schools, community organizations, the University, local businesses, bicycle advocacy groups, and city leaders and staff together to provide input and develop a plan. Well, that's exactly what Cedar Falls City Councilman David Wieland has done at the request of Mayor Crews.

This Bicycle-Friendly Task force has been meeting almost monthly since 2007 to encourage and facilitate utilitarian bicycling. They have developed an energetic list of goals that include:

- Becoming the first city in Iowa to achieve the gold status designation for Bicycle Friendly Communities
- Identifying and establishing a comprehensive bikeway network serving every neighborhood and major points of interest in the community
- Increasing bicycle use, so that 5% of all trips less than 5 miles are by bicycle
- Matching the total network miles of Cedar Falls recreational trails, currently 30+ miles, with an equal number of miles of on-road bike facilities
- Accommodating bicycling on every city road, resurfacing streetscape and traffic calming project
- Fully integrating the consideration of bicyclists' needs into community, commercial, industrial and neighborhood planning process, and
- Providing opportunity for all cyclists to learn the skills and techniques of safe, lawful and responsible cycling.

This group is well on its way to achieving several of these goals. A pilot bike-friendly corridor has been approved and will soon be ready for use. Bike lanes and "sharrows" will be added to Clay Street from 1<sup>st</sup> Street to Seerley Boulevard, and on Seerley from College Street to Peet Junior High School. A "sharrow" is a stencil of a bicyclist with a directional arrow, indicating that bicyclists should share the lane with motorists. If all goes well, this pilot project will be expanded to include College Street between Seerley Boulevard and 18<sup>th</sup> Street between College and Main Streets.

With financial assistance from the Cedar Trails Partnership and the Cedar Falls RAGBRAI committee, the Task Force has engaged the Active Transportation Alliance (formerly the Chicago Bicycle Federation) and the Iowa Bicycle Coalition to help develop a plan for future enhancements. A draft of this plan will be announced at a Public Input Meeting next Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, at 7pm, at Peet Junior High School, at 525 E. Seerley Boulevard in Cedar Falls. Mark Wyatt, Executive Director of the Iowa

Bicycle Coalition will be on hand to present the initial findings, identify missing links, and highlight existing barriers.

The first Bicycle Friendly Community application yielded Honorable Mention among the 51 applications received by the League and we are hopeful the progress we've made since will push of over the top in this current round.

Also, on the bicycling front, you'll want to mark your calendars and take part in the upcoming annual Trail Clean Up, sponsored by the Cedar Trails Partnership on Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>. Crew leaders will meet at Gateway, Pfeiffer, Prairie Lakes, and Valley View Parks; and at the downtown Waterloo trail head (4th Street and Washington). Thank you to Roger DeGroot for organizing this effort.

Ride Your Bike to Work activities will take place on Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup>. Free food and drink will be offered to commuters from 7am to 8:30am at Pfeiffer Park (near Krieg's Crossing Bridge) and Cedar River Trail in Waterloo (intersection of West Mullan and River Road). This is also a Cedar Trails Partnership event and is being organized by Redgie Blanco and his committee and is sponsored by Bike Tech and Europa Cycle and Ski.

Plans for another exciting Cedar Valley Trails Festival are under way. The Festival will take place August 6<sup>th</sup> through the 9<sup>th</sup> and Susan Lewis, Director of Community Development for the Waterloo Convention and Visitors Bureau is serving as the chairperson. We are currently seeking volunteers to help on the days of the event and/or to join our planning committee. It's really a lot of fun. If you have an interest, please call me at 268-4266.